

EFFIE ALSOP FINDS GOSSIP REAL TRAGEDY OF "DECEMBER-MAY" LOVE-SHATTERED CAREER

Once Wealthy Child Bride, Called Drug Addict, Refutes Recriminations by Brightness of Her Eyes and Crimson Cheeks

Girl, Who at 17 Wed Millionaire of 77, Quails at Fire of Publicity After Romance's Unhappy End, Fearing "Meddling" Will Kill Mother

LIFE has not dealt kindly with Mrs. Effie Pope Hill Alsop. Life has whirled her to heights of wealth and happiness, and life has whirled her to the depths again.

Recriminations that she is a drug addict, a drunkard, have robbed her of much of the respect of the smug people of the earth; reverses have stripped her of her wealth.

But there remains one thing which life cannot take from her. It is her love for her mother—and this, under the circumstances, seems to be the bitterest trick life could play.

Today, alone and friendless, twenty-seven-year-old Effie Pope Hill cries from the depths of her tortured heart:

"My shoulders can bear all this cruelty—all these lies—but oh, my mother—"

Not many days ago there appeared in the news columns of the country this item:

"The former Miss Effie Pope Hill, of Macon, Ga., the girl who ten years ago—when she was seventeen—became the bride of Edward B. Alsop, then seventy-seven, a wealthy manufacturer of Pittsburgh and Washington, was removed by force from a dingy-furnished room and taken to Bellevue Hospital, suffering from alcoholism and drug poisoning."

Immediately following the publication of the bit of news, a pilgrimage of news writers—sob sisters—set out in the direction of the "dingy-furnished room." And subsequent tales appeared of this "decline" and "dissolution" of this once most beautiful and charming woman.

So that the tragedy of Mrs. Effie Pope Hill Alsop has become not only the tragedy of temporary defeat, but seemingly the tragedy also of distorted facts.

"These lies are breaking my mother's heart," says Mrs. Alsop, and they certainly are robbing the young woman of much of her courage.

"Why don't people leave me alone? They hound me, they talk about me, they write about me—and I am forced to suffer their torturing. Why do these strangers hurt me?"

Age Gazes at Youth
With Wistful Eyes

Thirteen years ago a little golden-haired child was playing on the porch of a hotel at Lake Toxaway, N. C. Her mother, Mrs. John J. Hill, widow of a prominent physician of Washington, D. C., smiled at her, her eyes for a moment lifting from the pages of a book.

As the mother looked up she was conscious that another pair of eyes watched her daughter. They were those of a white-haired gentleman. His name she found later to be Edward B. Alsop; she learned besides that he was a millionaire.

Alsop was then seventy-four years old. In little Effie he saw all that was beautiful in youth. December gazed at May with wistful eyes. He had children of his own—two boys—one as old as this little girl, one younger. But he had never had such a brilliant little child, such a merry one.

Alsop soon became acquainted with Mrs. Hill and then with Effie. Their friendship grew. He gave the little girl many gifts, many courtesies and three years later, in 1912, when Effie was seventeen and he seventy-seven, he married her.

"I married Mr. Alsop," his young wife is reported to have said, "because I have the greatest admiration, the greatest respect and greatest faith in him—more than I ever had in my life for any other man, and so why shouldn't I have married him?"

"As long as we live I shall never regret the step, for he is all goodness, and has been during the three years I have known him—two of which I have been engaged to him."

She called him "Dad," so gossip goes, and even "Ra-time Kid," because he was so spry and active for his age. His two sons, in 1912, then both students at Harvard, entirely approved of their stepmother.

But two months after the wedding December and May were reported to be estranged. Mr. Alsop at that time transferred \$1,000,000 worth of his property to his two sons.

So quickly had she gotten married, so swift was the determination which carried this strange pair post-haste to Trinity Church, New York, that the new Mrs. Alsop declared she "even forgot to tell her mother about it until it was all over."

Kisses Drive Her Into Sanatorium

Later, in her attempted petition for divorce, Mrs. Alsop asserted that he so showered her with kisses and caresses that she was forced to enter a sanatorium, a victim of nervous prostration.

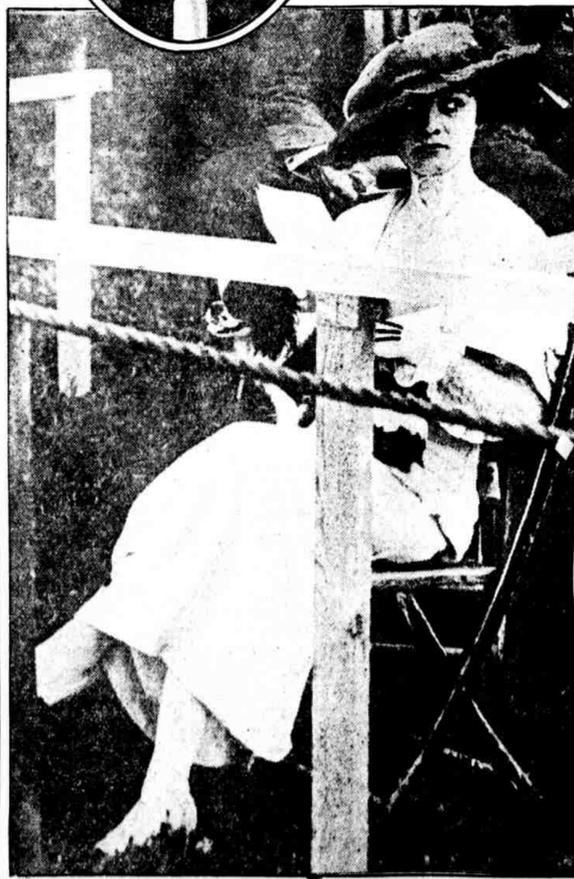
She said she went to a sanatorium at Litchfield, Conn., on April 1, 1912, remaining there twelve days. She returned to him, but, according to her, Alsop was even "more violent than before." In June of the same year she went to Europe to recuperate.

The following summer they lived together at their country place in Beverly, Mass. Mrs. Alsop claimed that her husband insulted her friends, and she left him forever in November, 1913.

In the meantime, Effie had tried the stage. She attempted the triple



Effie Hill Alsop in various poses at the height of her fortunes



tango with two other partners, but her husband protested so strongly that she was obliged to give up the work.

In 1916 Alsop successfully sued for divorce on the grounds of desertion.

Mrs. Alsop's "dingy-furnished room" is on West Forty-seventh street, up four flights of stairs. The apartment house is a comfortable and a clean one.

"I am sorry, but Mrs. Alsop is indisposed," said a young woman from a neighboring apartment.

"Under no circumstances will she see any one. Reporters have said so much that isn't true about her that she is afraid to see them."

The rather long and weary climb down the stairs was begun with a sense of defeat; the second floor was no sooner reached, however, when the woman's voice on the fourth floor called out:

"Mrs. Alsop will see you for two minutes—only two minutes!"

Back again to the fourth floor to receive the invitation to enter the "dingy-furnished" room of Mrs. Alsop, veronal addict and alcoholic,

if the newspaper stories were correct.

Mrs. Alsop's apartment was not dingy, though it was not in any sense grand. The furniture was new, the wallpaper bright and clean. It might have been the reception room in which anybody could live comfortably—it had no individuality. It was neither suggestive of picturesque life, nor of joy or sadness—until Mrs. Alsop entered from her bedroom.

A Boyish Figure in Loose Kimono

In her slim fingers she carried a lighted cigarette. White arms extended from the looseness of a pink, hand-painted kimono. The kimono was open at the breast, revealing the dainty edge of a camisole or something of the sort and her pearl white throat.

Her figure is boyish and graceful. One expected a face as boyishly fresh and pink, but it was not. It was rouged—one felt, unnecessarily and rather badly—and her hair was haloed in a tangle of yellow, frizzed bobbed hair.

She dropped into a roomy armchair, her head resting on the back and her cigarette hand hanging loosely over the arm of the chair.

"Don't mind this kimono, please. I paint—little pictures—not good ones—and I've smudged up this old thing."

She spread out a fold or two of the pink cover-all to show the paint spots. Her voice is resonant and carries the drawl and softness of the South—she was born in Georgia. She broadens her

I got to my room here I was in horrible pain—almost unconscious.

"I called to the lady in the apartment next to mine. I asked her to please get me a doctor. And a doctor came—or rather a man who was supposedly a doctor. This man who was supposedly a doctor," Mrs. Alsop said this with the suggestion of a sneer, "did nothing for me, and I called for an ambulance. I thought I was going to die."

"They say I fought like a tiger when the ambulance came. You can say I fought like a tiger. Of course I did. They said they were going to take me to the Bellevue Hospital. Of course, I fought like a tiger. I'm neither poor nor a drug addict, and I wasn't drunk. I stayed in the hospital only forty-eight hours. It's ridiculous to say I stayed there ten days, and that I am under the care of a doctor. I'm under the care of nobody."

Alsop Didn't Leave Her Pauper, She Says

"And I'm not poor, and I never was a stenographer nor a telephone operator, and I am not on the Good Lord, Mr. Alsop didn't leave me a pauper! I have a few stocks and bonds and some real estate."

Whatever she has left, it belies the fact that only ten years ago she had riches, a home on Fifth avenue, friends among the very wealthy and the very famous. Today, whether she feels it so or not, she smears the appearance of irreconcilable defeat. Her heart has been trod upon, her life has been trod upon, crushed by gossip, scandal-mongering, and perhaps the thoughtlessness of friends.

Her ten or fewer years since Mr. Alsop divorced her is not a story she will tell, at any rate. Whatever those years have brought her remains locked within her breast. Whatever they have taken from her, her loss is somehow manifested in her disgust with the intolerance, the cruel thoughtlessness of people.

"I wish I were back in England," she cried. "There I am left alone. And I want to be alone. I want to live my life with some dignity—I don't want to be stayed by the everlasting indecent meddling of other persons."

"Why must they insist on troubling me?"

It gave the public a generous opportunity to gabble, to predict dire results—as the public always does when one of its children does the extraordinary. And now there is little question that the public viewed with mingled satisfaction and horror what seems to it the defeat of a person "who dared do otherwise," what seems to it a confirmation of its always "disinterested and well-meaning" predictions.

Gossip Bitterest Part of Her Tragedy

And the public doesn't realize that the attitude which even a greater tragedy than the tragedy of Mrs. Alsop's life; that it is this attitude which forces perhaps the bitterest and most unnecessary portions of tragedy into the days and the hours of her life.

Mrs. Alsop feels this. She is poignantly conscious of it. And she begged that no "more lies" be told about her, that people leave her alone.

This woman who wants to be left alone sat in the roomy armchair, a picture of pink and flaming yellow. Her mood needed black, deep, brooding black. The contrast of the picture the eye saw and the picture the mind saw was intensely dramatic.

"After all," continued Mrs. Alsop, "the lies don't hurt me so much. My shoulders are young and strong enough to bear all this."

Half lying in the chair, her shoulders appeared unusually frail—in the informality of her posture one was conscious of less strength than of resignation and indifference. One thought of crushed flowers, of a soft bruised bird in the palm of the hand.

"But it's breaking the heart of my mother." A mist filled her eyes when she said this. The cigarette in her hand was forgotten. She leaned forward in her chair.

"My shoulders are big enough, I suppose, to bear anything," she said. "Anything?" There was something of desperation in her voice. "But my mother's aren't. All this is breaking my mother's heart—and that—that breaks my heart."

Mrs. Alsop roused herself. "But you needn't bother mentioning that," she added quickly, as if to hide what might have seemed a weakening of will, a disclosure of intimate thoughts never meant for alien ears.

"But if it is lies which are breaking your mother's heart, why shouldn't your mother see the truth in a paper," she was asked, "especially since you care for her so much?"

Her lips twitched. Tears rimmed her eyes.

"When you talk about my mother—when you—" Tears were in her voice, and her hand went suddenly to her mouth as if to stay the twitching of it. "Please—please—that's—that's—I can't—"

She got up from the chair. Her fingers in her straw-colored hair, the palm of her hand resting over her eye and forehead, she hastily walked to the door.

At the door her kimono wrapped itself around her slim body and as she turned under the lintel into the other room, it flowed out again, like a great flower, suddenly blooming. A faint fragrance she left in the air. She left, too, a visitor who admired the courage which can fight to keep the most excruciating of pains secret in the heart; she left a visitor who was somehow humiliated.

a's, truncates her r's—she speaks easily and well.

"I didn't want to talk with you," she began. "I don't want to talk with anybody. The only reason I am seeing you now—and it will only be for two minutes—is a hope I feel that perhaps I can find one newspaper that will publish what is so, and will not lie about me."

"It is terrible! Why do people trouble about me—why don't they mind their own business? If you believe what most persons are made to think, I am a drug addict and a drunkard. I am neither."

Denial of Addiction Borne Out by Face

"I'll swear that I haven't taken veronal more than twice in all my life."

Mrs. Alsop did not look like an addict. Her face was painted not wisely but too well; underneath the cosmetic, however, one could catch the softness and the freshness of her cheeks, and her eyes were neither the dead nor hectic burning eyes of a drug addict—they were bright and intelligent and disarming.

"They said I was moved by force from a dingy room—" Her lip curled a little. She pulled languidly at her cigarette, and then with a half gesture of impatience resumed:

"But I'll tell you the real truth about that disgraceful business the other night. I went out in the evening. It was a party of six, and we had a couple of drinks. There's nothing wrong in that, is there?"

"It was vile stuff, however. I didn't know it. I had only a couple of drinks, but I became suddenly very sick. When